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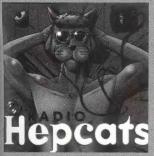
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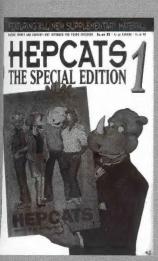
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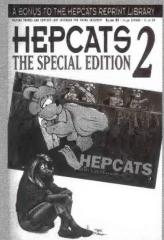


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Official Hepcats Drill Team

Feller

Comics vs. Toys

BY JOE DUNN

Well, my brother and I just returned from the 1997 International Tov Fair in New York City, which was a great deal of fun. First some quick observations and opinions:

- 1) Toy Fair is big... I mean really big.
- 2) N.Y.C. drivers are crazy but I never felt unsafe.
- 3) Phantom of the Opera is better than Cats.
- 4) Do not try the Motion Simulator Ride: CINEMA RIDE in 3-D especially if you are even slightly overweight. The seats are made for threeyear-olds. The ride also gave me a massive headache.
- 5) Airline strikes or even the possibility of an airline strike sucks.

I like New York City. It's a fun place to visit...but I would never live there. First, I probably would be dead in less than a month, and second, renting a parking space for a month costs more than my monthly mortgage.

Alright, enough babble and more substance...Comics versus Toys. An unfair comparison, you say? True enough, but since Antarctic is involved in both, I decided to give it a try.

Largest Comic Publisher = Marvel Entertainment (in bankruptcy) Largest Toy Manufacturer = Hasbro (record 4th quarter sales)

Largest Comic Retailer = ? (probably Mile Largest Toy Retailer = Toys R' Us

Total # of Comic Retailers = 5000 Total # of Toys R' Us stores = 1000

Best selling Comic = X-Men (Marvel) Best selling Toy = Barbie (Mattel)

Hollye Hitt & Kathryn Worth of 100 shares of Marvel (on Feb. 14th) = \$200

Worth of 100 shares of Mattel (on Feb. 14th) = \$2712.50

Largest Comic convention = San Diego, attendance 30,000-40,000 International Toy Fair, attendance 50,000+ (no consumers)

I could go on, but I think you get the point. Don't get me wrong... I love comics. If it wasn't for the comics industry, we would not be able to do our toys. I'm not saying that the comics industry should be like the toy industry, but why can't we take advantage of the toy industry to help comics? Many comic companies have started to do action figures recently. Are they doing this because they are committed to comics or are they doing this as the next trend to be exploited and driven into the ground just like comics and trading cards before? I hope that we have all learned the error of our ways and will treat this next synergy with some respect. Can we grow with the toy industry...or are we just the instrument for the next collector's destruction? Can we survive the Tapestry Picard or multiple repaints or carded variations? I don't know...but my experience has shown that if we rush blindly into such things, the odds aren't

Antarctic is trying by reducing the cost of our toys, making them available only to comic specialty stores and informing the retailer about ALL details regarding the figures. We're doing our best to make this a long-term merger of toys and comics, not just a quick grab for profits. If it works, maybe we can look forward to the day when San Diego dwarfs Toy Fair.

Preposterous? Maybe...but wouldn't it be cool?

Hepcats fans check out Denise Voskuil's official web site: http://www.mcs.net/ ~dvoskuil/hepcats

Hepcats, no. 4, March 1997, is published by the Antarctic Press, 7272 Wurzbach, Suite #204, San Antonio, TX 78240. FAX#:(210) 614-5029. Hepcats © and TM 1997 Martin Wagner. Stories and art ©1997 Martin Wagner. All other material is TM and copyright © 1997 Antarctic Press. No similarity to any character(s) and/or place(s) is intended, and any similarity is purely coincidental. Nothing from this book may be reproduced without the express written consent of the creator, except for purposes of review or promotion. "We make the world significant by the courage of our questions and the strength of our answers." - Carl Sagan RIP. Print run: 7000. Printed by Brenner Printing, San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.

Hepcats Snowblind

CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY

MARTIN WAGNER

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY
DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS, JANUARY 1990

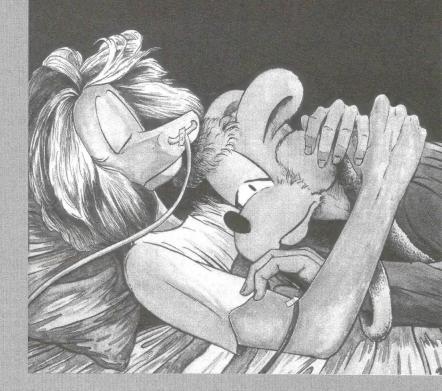
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ISSUE NUMBER 4 MARCH 1997 Into the Pavilions

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Martin with the Hepcats Drill Team, spring 1997.

HEPCATS 4 CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1997 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats'* first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)

This issue's chapter gets you into the meat of the Snowblind plotline, with the inciting incident of the story (Erica's encountering the stalker in the shopping mall) propelling you into the action proper after an issue's worth of setup in number three. First, the mistakes. Here, at the age of 23, I was getting into what would be my first lengthy storyline outside of the daily strip. Now, the daily strip did have some lengthy storylines all its own, but overall the general thrust was still that of a daily strip: four panels ending in a laugh line. Here I was attempting serialized fiction for the first time, and I tripped a few times, but on the whole, I'm proud of the achievement considering my age and inexperience at the time.

The one thing I would change were I doing this chapter today would be the way in which Erica first notices her stalker. You see towards the end of the issue Erica checking herself in her makeup mirror, and catching her first glimpse of this person reflected behind her and down one floor in the mirror. In retrospect this pushes credibility a bit too far, particularly since it's apparent her follower wants her (though not her male companions) to notice him, which further renders illogical the depiction of her accidentally seeing him in her mirror at an angle at which it would require some extreme luck to do so. Today, if I were writing the scene, I'd have him follow her into a clothing store at a moment she chose to go in alone to try on some clothes or something, then announce himself. This would further tighten the whole mall scene, avoiding the chase through the crowds that ends this issue and carries over to #5, where Erica faints and this mysterious fellow carries her out a service entrance into an alley. In the clothing store scenario, Erica could faint right away, he could carry her out, and the action would be more compressed, faster-paced, and more suspenseful. And the whole thing would be a tad more believeable, too.

So why, you ask, don't I change it all now I have the chance? Well, because this is where I was then, and I don't wish to mess with my past unless it's absolutely necessary, and I think these issues can live with the scene as it is; they'll just be pretty good instead of great. Another reason (more tellingly) is that we're talking about the redrawing of many pages rather then just repositioning an arm or relettering a balloon, so I simply don't want to fuck with it. (One dialogue balloon in this issue has in fact been reworded from the 1990 original.) And the final reason is that by keeping my old work in its original form as closely as possible, it will be there always for me to continue to reference, in my never-ending education and quest to get better and better. An artist should be allowed to make mistakes; only by making them will they be there for one to learn from. And I have really had to learn to be a storyteller, and the education has been most stimulating and rewarding.

For example. Rule #1 for any aspiring writer. Never ever ever ever fall in love with any idea! The only thing that can go in your finished story is what works in service of the story. Very often you come up with an awesome idea for the coolest scene, man, but suddenly, when it comes right down to actually doing the story, you may just find that inclusion of the scene simply doesn't fit, or renders all the action up to that point thoroughly illogical, or even negates everything you've done before. And the hallmark of the professional is the willingness to throw something away that doesn't work, no matter how kickass it may be. And in the field of comics, where spectacle and excitement and big splash pages are often the order of the day, nonsensical storytelling is sadly all too common. (I'm sure the superhero readers among you are familiar with the inconsistencies and loose ends in the endless X-Men continuity.) Writing is all about taking stuff out, and tightening stuff up, not throwing in everything plus the kitchen sink in the hope some of it works.

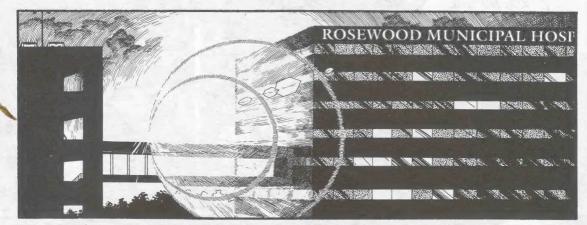
So, as I said with #2, by being able to get a few things wrong in these first tentative issues, I was able to learn my craft so that the later issues would be good enough to earn the praise they ultimately earned (thank you, he said blushing).

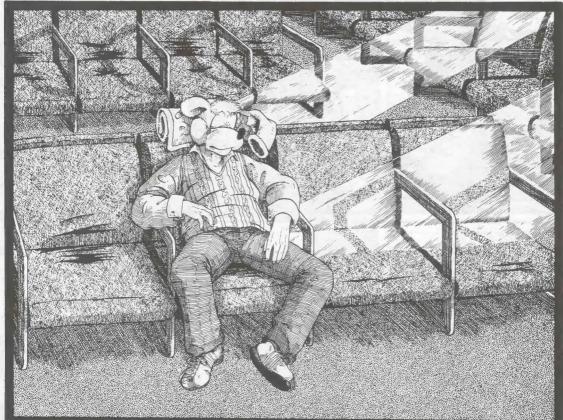
Speaking of big splash pages: this is the issue with the big mall shot that caused something of a stir among fans. There is no actual Westcreek Mall in Austin; in fact multi-level malls aren't as common in Texas as they are elsewhere. The mall herein is an amalgam of some Houston malls I haunted in my teen years, such as Town & Country and the Galleria (the elevator is swiped from Galleria 2). In the upper right you'll see a shop on the top floor called Book Den. This is in homage to Book Den on Rice Blvd., a late and lamented small bookshop I used to frequent in Houston in the late 70's. It was run by a loveable cranky old bastard who, unlike most booksellers, never stripped any paperbacks for return; thus his floors were often obstacle courses of teetering, precariously stacked books, and the whole place was redolent with the pungent odor of pulp. Marvelous! Sad there are so few places like that today. A shop on the third to last page, last panel, is named after my ex-wife. It's safe to say that one's out of business.

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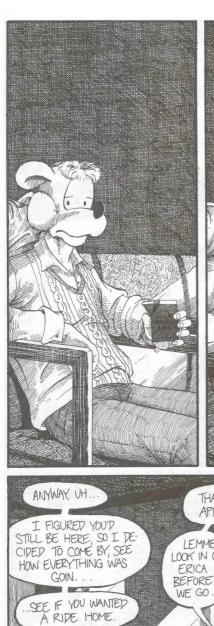
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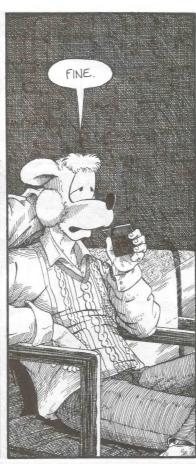








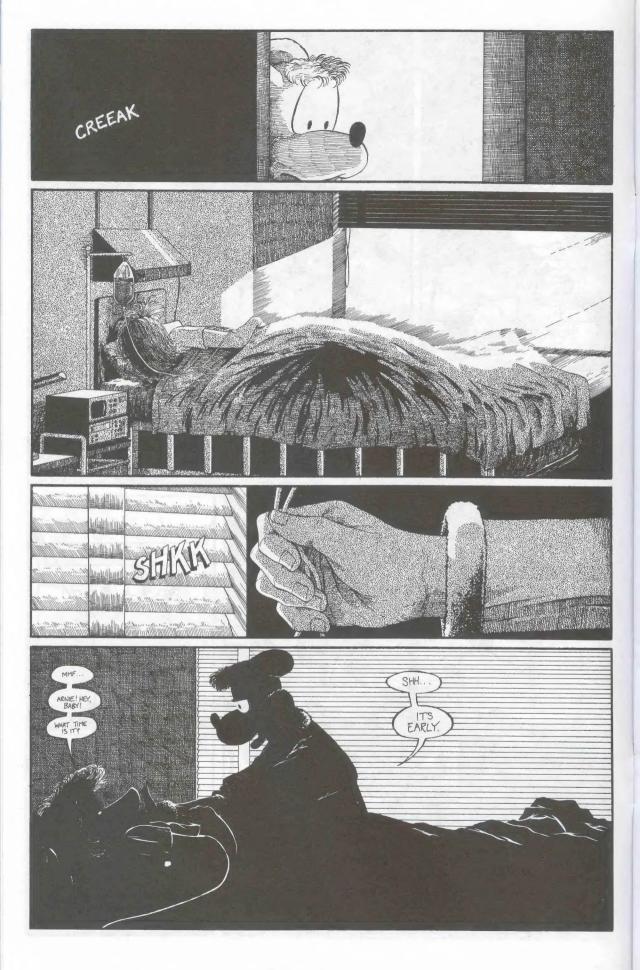








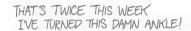












OH, I'VE BEEN PRACTISING SOME MOVES A DANCER FRIEND OF MINE FROM NEW ORLEANS NAMED MADELLENE TRIED TO TEACH ME WAY BACK.

IVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DO HALF THE STUFF SHE DID.

AND THESE FEET HAVENT QUITE BEEN THE SAME SINCE I'VE BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL.

BOURBON STREET DANCING CAN GET PRET-TY WILD, IF YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT.

I MEAN, WE SWING FROM THE RAFTERS, TWIRL AROUND THE POLE UPSIDE DOWN— DO STUFF YOU'D HAVE TO SEE TO BELIEVE. ANYTHING FOR A FUN SHOW, RIGHT?

THERE WAS ONE GIRL WHEN I WAS THERE WHO CALLEP HERSELF "AURORA." I DIDN'T KNOW HER WELL, BUT MAPELIENE DID.

WELL, ONE NIGHT—AND I GUESS SHE MUST HAVE BEEN COKED OUT OF HER MIND BECAUSE SHE SAID SHE NEVER FELT IT— AURORA WAS SWINGING FROM THE RAFTERS WITH ONE HAND, AND SHE LOST HER GRIP AND FLEW INTO A TABLE WHERE SOME FOOTBALL TEAM WAS SITTING.

SHE DID A SOMERSAULT IN MID-AIR. IT WAS WILD.

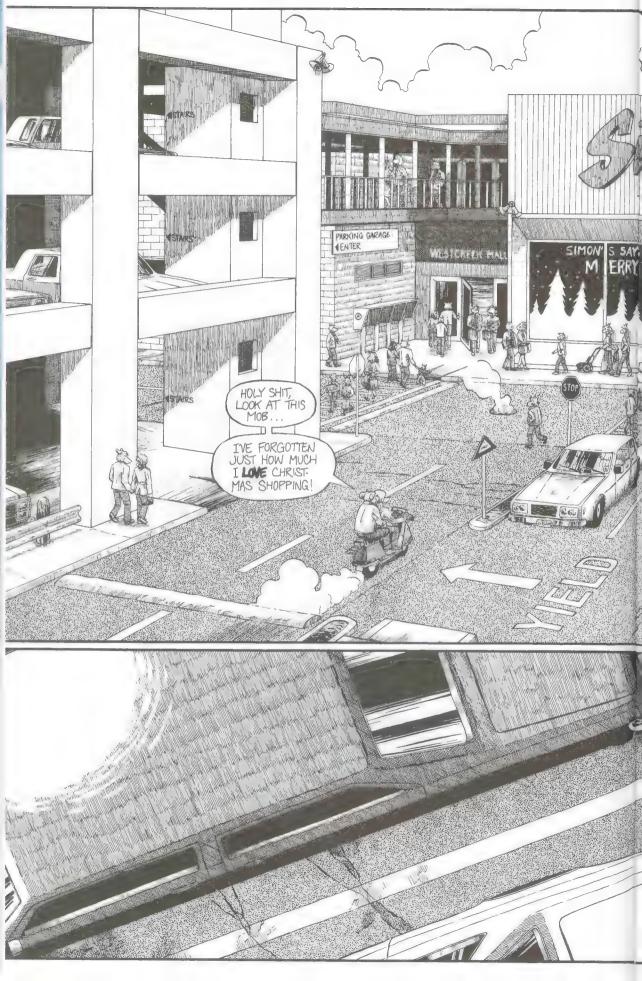
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SHE BROKE THREE RIBS AND CRACKED HER PELVIS. BUT SHE KEPT WANTING TO GET BACK ON STAGE AND FINISH HER SONG...

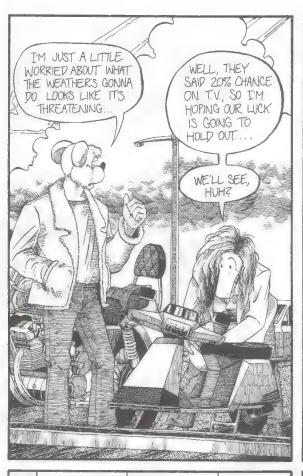
AURORA WAS ALWAYS FUCKED UP ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THOUGH ...

I WONDER WHY I THOUGHT OF HER JUST NOW?







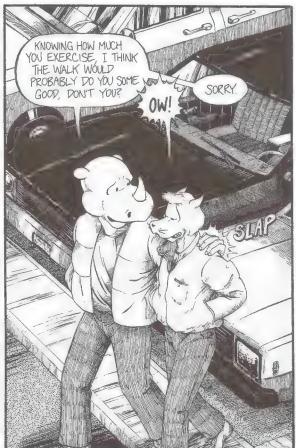






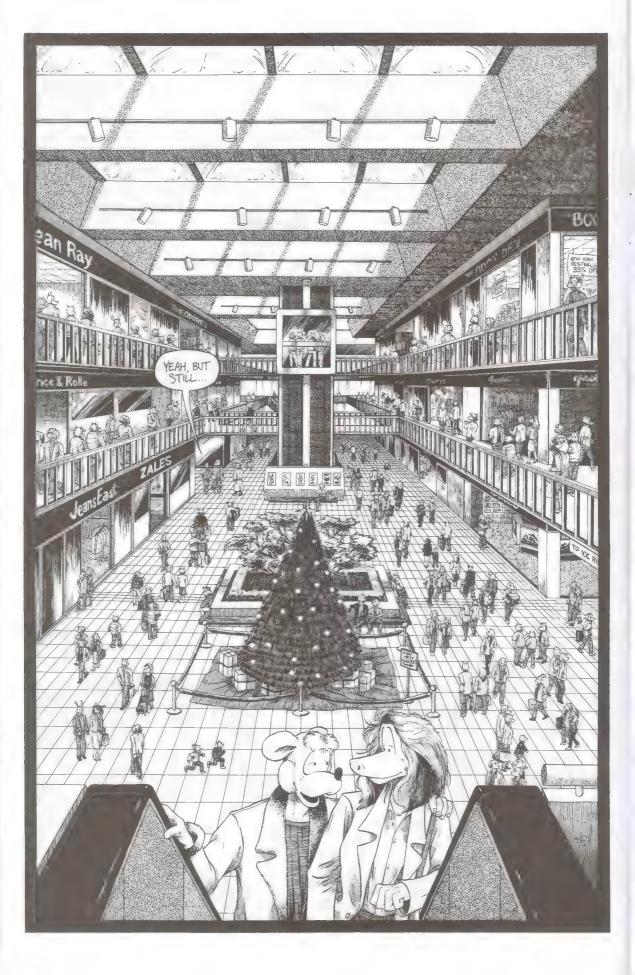










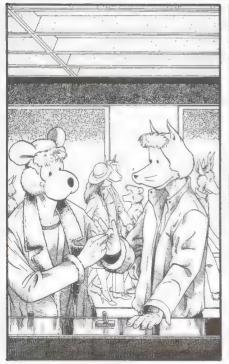
























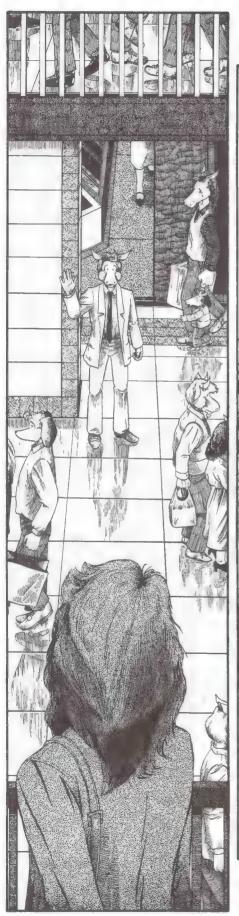
DOES THE TERM
"GASTROINTESTINAL
TRACT INFECTION"
MEAN ANYTHING
TO YOU?

LOOK, THERE'S A CAFETERIA JUST DOWN THE ESCALATORS.







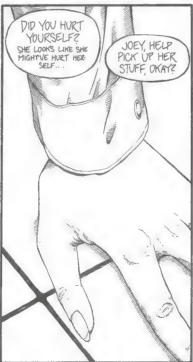


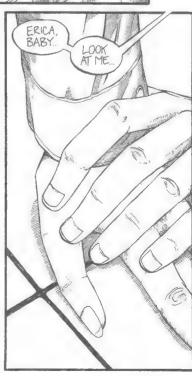
































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What if Hepcats comics were forbidden?

Outrageous? Sure it is, but the works of many comic book professionals have been seized and sometimes banned by the real life thought police.

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund was founded to fight these threats. In the last five years, the CBLDF has spent over \$200,000 defending First Amendment rights in the comic book industry. We have successfully defended or deterred over a dozen threats to comic book artists, publishers, and retailers from over-zealous police departments, prosecutors, and would-be censors.

Please help us continue our mission to fight censorship by making a donation. With your support, the CBLDF can continue to champion comic book professionals' freedom of speech. After all, it's the thought police who should be banned!

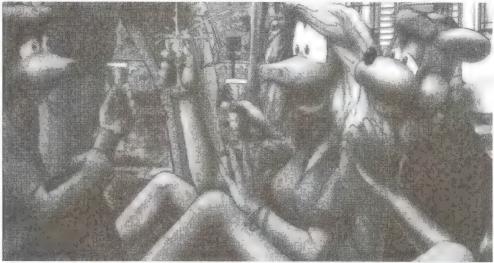
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A NOTE FROM THE CREATOR OF HEPCATS

It's very disturbing to me to see that, even with a moderate Democrat in the White House, the forces of ultraconservatism are still out there trying to tell you and me what we can read, look at, listen to, see, and think. If you think that sounds melodramatic, please, come out from under your rock. Recent cases such as the Oklahoma bust of Planet Comics (a set-up by the Christian Coalition) and the conviction of Mike Diana in Florida, which is now being taken to the Supreme Court, point to a frightening trend.

Opportunistic politicians and prosecutors are targeting comics because we're an easy target. Comics are not a mass medium; they are a marginal art form without the public support and the money that Hollywood and the music business have to defend themselves. So it's easy for the advocates of censorship to cement their individual careers by pandering to the fears and prejudices of their uneducated constituents, by conjuring up horrible images of perverted artists and sleazy retailers pushing porno comics into the hands of little kiddies. It's certainly an inflammatory image, until you realize the image is a lie.

You can fight the lie! Whether you choose to order this poster, or just to send the CBLDF a straight-up donation, they need help! They are running out of money and would not have been able to continue Mike Diana's appeal had the Florida ACLU not stepped in.

Now, whether you like or dislike Mike Diana's comics is irrelevant. (I hate them myself.) What is relevant is that once one artist's rights are taken away, it opens the door for a further whittling away of everyone's personal freedoms, until all that will be left for us to read and look at will be listed on a government-approved form...

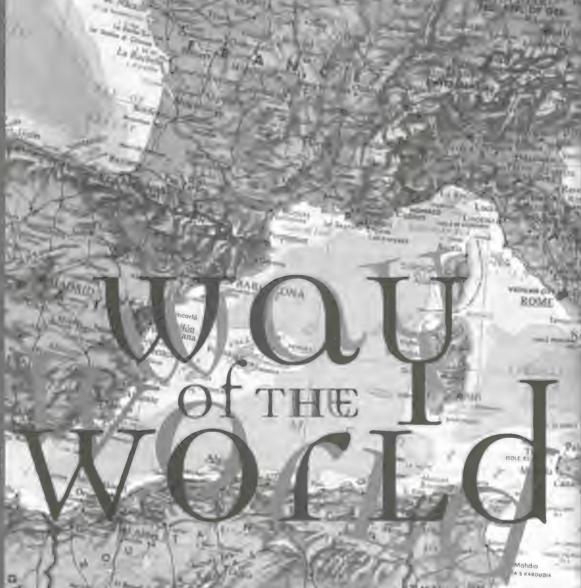
No way, not in my America!

When Hepcats #7 first came out, it caused a minor sensation due to the nude scene on the preceeding page. I find the scene non-exploitative and even beautiful, but there are people whose minds are so poisoned by the idea that all sex is dirty, that they might like to see me tossed in jail for that image. Story context is immaterial. All that matters is the knee-jerk reaction. God only knows what these people might think of Hepcats #11...

Please support the CBLDF today! As the saying goes, all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good

people-you-to do nothing.

Thank you,
Martin Wagner



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